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5. — *The History of Napoleon the First.* By P. LANFREY. Vol. I. London and New York : Macmillan & Co. 1871.

THIS work has been written mainly as an examination of the moral character of the Emperor Napoleon. Whoever expects to find it a history of Europe, or even of France, during his life, will be disappointed. Whoever expects to find it a brilliant or even a reasonably entertaining narrative of the dramatic events with which it is concerned, will be no less disappointed. And truth compels us to add, that no one will find the book to be a kind, a generous, or even a just estimate of character.

The writer is a Frenchman, at any rate by adoption ; he is a republican, evidently ; he believes that republican government in France, after the Revolution, might have been continued ; and he is absolutely without mercy or excuse for him who destroyed it. There is nothing in the English histories of this epoch that even approaches the rancor of this book. It is such a book as a fifth-monarchy man might have written about Oliver Cromwell ; such a book as a New England Tory might have written about John Hancock or Samuel Adams. It is not pleasant reading, we can assure the public ; the hatred is too predominant ; the blame is too continuous ; it becomes wearisome.

This, however, may be necessary in dealing with the moral character of a man so selfish and so unscrupulous as Bonaparte confessedly was. But we surely have a right to insist that it shall be shown to be necessary. We have a right to the whole evidence, and to the argument on both sides ; and the worst about this book is, that we do not get either. Not, perhaps, that Mr. Lanfrey means to be unfair : there is no need of our saying whether, in our judgment, he does or not ; but that the man's mind is narrow ; and, more than this, that his spirit is throughout that of the prosecuting attorney ; he does not feel himself bound to give the prisoner the benefit of those facts which he conceives would be mistakenly supposed to palliate his crimes ; far less does he condescend to state his defence in his own words. Nay, more, it would be a wholly inadequate idea of the part taken by M. Lanfrey in this biography did we liken him to the prosecuting attorney, as we know him in this country, or in England ; it is the *procureur d'état* of his own country whom he has taken for his model ; and with what success we shall endeavor briefly to show.

In the outset we see Napoleon introduced as the marplot of his age. "It [the eighteenth century] carried on the work of its forerunners, — the sixteenth, which saw the birth of the Reformation, and the seventeenth, which saw the triumph of English institutions ; it was in communion

with all the stirring spirits of the past. . . . The thinkers who had shed a lustre over its course were followed by great practical men who carried their plans into execution. After Locke, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau, rose Turgot, Franklin, Mirabeau, and Washington. The American Republic, child of experiment, irreproachable as a creation of pure reason, (!) was on the point of rising up beyond the seas to serve as a beacon to all future societies. The future appeared so assured, and the course of events so irresistible, that even the wisest were not proof against a certain intoxication. . . . Not content with proclaiming the end of religious and political despotism, they went on to predict the end of superstition, the end of misery, the end of slavery, the end of conquest, the end of war. *It was towards this time that there was born in a small island, obscure and nearly without history, a child who was to be called Napoleon Bonaparte. There is little need to point out the contrast between this extraordinary man and the general spirit of his epoch; it strikes the eye instantly. From his character and his ideas, and especially from the aim he had in view, Napoleon seems to belong to another age.*"

This passage really gives one a perfectly fair idea of M. Lanfrey's method. Observe the entire absence of any allusion to those facts of contemporary history, which serve in a measure to account for the character and the career of Napoleon; to the wretchedness of the lower classes and the luxury and want of public spirit of the upper classes in France under the old *régime*; to the atrocities of the Revolution; to the protracted contest in Germany, and the powerful influence of the Great Frederick, the foremost man and the best soldier in Europe; to the successful partition of Poland; to the British conquests in North America and in India; to the fame of Warren Hastings and of William Pitt. When one recalls these facts, so artfully left out of the picture of that happy, peaceful, and enlightened era which the ambition of Napoleon Bonaparte was to disturb, we cannot but admire the skill which is thus employed to prejudice the reader at the very beginning against the subject of M. Lanfrey's memoir.

This sort of thing we find at every turn. The violation of the neutrality of Venice in 1796 is one of M. Lanfrey's most grievous accusations. One would suppose that the occupation of Brescia was one of the most inexcusable injuries ever inflicted upon a neutral power. We find, indeed, that Venice had granted to the Austrians a military road through her territory, "which was indispensable for their communications with the Tyrol"; but it never seems to occur to our author that no officer in General Bonaparte's position could respect the territory of Venice after this. For all practical purposes

the territory through which an enemy's army can pass is enemy's territory, and no general, engaged, as Bonaparte was, against superior numbers, can afford to throw away his chances, because a state which allows the enemy a line of communication through its territory chooses to call itself neutral.

And in dealing with the conduct of Bonaparte toward the various Italian states, we observe the greatest fulness of detail and of arguments in convicting him of fraud and violence, and we note the significant absence of any fair presentation of these circumstances, which readily occur to any one at all familiar with the condition of Italy at this time, which would go towards mitigating our judgment. Such facts are the well-known secret leanings of all the minor states towards Austria; the inability of the maritime states to preserve the neutrality of their seaports from the English; the tremendous temptation to an officer carrying on a campaign, such as those of 1796 and 1797, to secure his communications more firmly than by merely relying on the word and the neutrality of petty principalities, whose rulers were allied by blood, or by the stronger sympathy of kindred principles of government with his enemy, in opposition to the new French Republic. All these considerations, and such as these, we are fairly entitled to; they may or they may not excuse the conduct of the French general; perhaps they should be held to be too trivial to weigh in the balance with what M. Lanfrey, from the chair of pure morality, can urge; but such as they are, they will strike most people as material facts, and they will not look upon that as a trustworthy history which ignores them.

The same perverse refusal to let his readers see but one side, and that the worst side, of the subject of his memoir, comes out in the treatment of the *coup d'état* of the 18th of Brumaire, 1799. We do not complain of M. Lanfrey that his judgment, from the facts he chooses to give us, is too harsh; the fault we find is that he omits many and important elements in the case. The fact that the Directory which was overthrown was itself an oligarchy, and a most odious oligarchy, although dwelt upon at length where the *coup d'état* of the 18th of Fructidor, 1797, is treated of, is not adverted to as palliating the course of Bonaparte in 1799. The government of that Republic which Bonaparte is so much abused for overthrowing, is described elsewhere as having "sealed the enslavement of France," and "destroyed all liberty of the press." Surely these facts should be brought into close juxtaposition with the narrative of the Revolution which destroyed such a government.

But one or two more instances of our author's method must suffice. In speaking of General Bonaparte's character, he adopts a mode of

criticism against which it is difficult to see how any man can defend himself. "When he was first sent to the army of Italy, and raised above generals who were mostly his superiors in age and reputation, he saw that *in order to have power over them* he must command their respect, not only by the brilliancy of his achievements, but by firmness, gravity, and character. Hence the severe watch he kept over himself, the *studied* simplicity of his habits, and the surprising austerity of his life," etc. Again, "If Bonaparte chose to remain incorruptible among so many venal souls, he did so from superiority of pride and ambition, and not of virtue." One cannot help being reminded of the Troppman trial, of which the following is reported: "The president of the court to the prisoner: 'Well, at Roubaix no one ever noticed in you, though you were only twenty years old, any of those irregular habits which are usually found in young men of that age. You came in regularly at eleven o'clock every night. But still you talked constantly of your craving for riches,' " etc.

Once more; here is a slight thing in itself, but it shows the *animus* of the writer, and is the more valuable in that respect as the means of proving M. Lanfrey in the wrong are more accessible in regard to this than in respect to most of the details of persons and of negotiations, of which he gives us so many. Speaking of the expedition to Egypt, he says: "He [Bonaparte] did not confine himself in his choice of generals to his old companions in arms of the army of Italy, but made a choice from among all the armies of the Republic, *thus depriving them of all nerve and muscle. He seemed unwilling to leave any one of any worth behind.* He took Desaix, Kléber, Davoust, Reynier, Caffarelli, and Belliard, and with them his old lieutenants, Murat, Lannes, Marmont, Berthier, Andréossy, Junot, *and every one who had youth, energy, and daring.*" The fact was, that as many good officers were left, to say the least, as accompanied him to Egypt. Among others who were engaged in the campaigns of 1799 in Italy, Switzerland, and on the Rhine, we may mention Moreau, Massena, Joubert, Lecourbe, Ney, Soult, St. Cyr, and Macdonald. How far the harsh and bitter insinuations of M. Lanfrey are justified, any one can judge.

We do not desire to be hard upon M. Lanfrey. His work was written during the Second Empire, and it undoubtedly comes under that class of (so called) historical books which are really political pamphlets, of which Napoleon's "Cæsar" is a remarkable instance. M. Lanfrey undoubtedly felt that all he could say against the first Napoleon would tell against the third Napoleon; and feeling as he did, he threw into his undertaking a bitterness and an intensity of partisan spirit to which no purely historical reflections could have given rise.

The result is a work written unquestionably with great pains, containing a large mass of facts, some of them new, and embodying what are undoubtedly the opinions of a certain class of his countrymen about the great man who ruled France with a vigor and ability never surpassed. We have no fault to find with M. Lanfrey for his conclusions; but we do find great fault with him for the thoroughly one-sided way in which he has written; for his disingenuousness in treating of controverted topics; for his want of generosity when treating of the things that present Napoleon in a favorable light. In our judgment, the work of Sir Walter Scott, with all its faults, and with all its national prejudice, will give one a much more just idea of Napoleon's character than can be got from M. Lanfrey's history.

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6. — *The Life of John Milton: narrated in Connection with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of his Time.* By DAVID MASSON, M. D., LL. D., Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature in the University of Edinburgh. Vol. II. 1638–1643. London and New York: Macmillan & Co. 1871. 8vo. pp. xii, 608.

If the biographies of literary men are to assume the bulk which Mr. Masson is giving to that of Milton, their authors should send a phial of *elixir vite* with the first volume, that a purchaser might have some valid assurance of surviving to see the last. Mr. Masson has already occupied thirteen hundred and seventy-eight pages in getting Milton to his thirty-fifth year, and an interval of eleven years stretches between the dates of the first and second instalments of his published labors. As Milton's literary life properly begins at twenty-one with the "Ode on the Nativity," and as by far the more important part of it lies between the year at which we are arrived and his death at the age of sixty-six, we might seem to have the terms given us by which to make a rough reckoning of how soon we are likely to see land. But when we recollect the baffling character of the winds and currents we have already encountered, and the eddies that may at any time slip us back to the reformation in Scotland or the settlement of New England; when we consider, moreover, that Milton's life overlapped the *grand siècle* of French literature, with its irresistible temptations to digression and homily for a man of Mr. Masson's temperament, we may be pardoned if a sigh of doubt and discouragement escape us. We envy the secular leisures of Methusaleh, and are thankful that *his* biography at least (if written in the same longeval proportion) is irrecoverably lost